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*Lyra*

*Levis*

*By*

*Edward*

*Bliss*

*Reed*







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*LYRA LEVIS*

*By the Same Author*  
*English Lyrical Poetry*  
*Lyra Yalensis*  
*Sea Moods*



# *LYRA LEVIS*

*By Edward Bliss Reed*

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*SOME of the poems in this little volume have previously appeared in "Lyra Yalensis," the edition of which is exhausted. A few have been printed in "Sea Moods," the first edition of which is not exhausted, though the publisher's patience is. I desire to thank "Asia," "The Independent," "The Oxford Magazine," the "Yale Alumni Weekly" and the "Yale Review" for permission to reprint certain of these verses; but I wish to thank much more heartily any one who cares to read them.*

*E. B. R.*



## Preface

"Dulce est"—(elide one "e"; 'twill scan)—  
Desipere." Those words are true.

Horace is right; it's good for man  
To take time off and not get blue.

I cannot judge that person sane  
Who seems to be afraid to smile.  
It's wise at times to be inane,  
To read books that are not worth while.\*

We hear too much to make us wise,  
We bolt it all—the wheat, the chaff.  
We'd see more if we closed our eyes,  
We'd learn more if we learned to laugh.

Then, Melancholy, you're not wanted;  
Nor Wisdom, with her foolish frippery.  
Black Care, home to your cave ghost-haunted!  
Here for brief moments we'll desipere.

\* This is one. *Author's Note.*





## *To the Reader*

In a fine poem, Herrick said  
When he would have his verses read.  
He laid down the specific times  
For men to seek his lyric rhymes.  
Though I'm not quite so good as he,  
My readers have more liberty.  
No rules I'll place (for who would heed  
them),  
About these pages—only read them  
At noon or night, in sun or rain,  
In easy chair or on the train,  
For every reader is my gain.  
Yet to one evil I'm averse;  
Avoid it, and my poet's curse.  
When you have glanced these verses through,  
Refrain from what so many do—  
Never, my reader, never lend them;  
Much better in the flames to send them,  
For if you loan this book, I guess  
The publishers will sell one less.  
So now I speak in awful tones  
The poet's curse that chills the bones:  
*Long may that man in darkness smother  
Who lends these verses to another.*

## *Ambition*

I delight in Harkness tower  
With its beauty, new each hour,  
When the dark-blue rain clouds lower  
    O'er its head;  
When the moonlight plays around it,  
When the dazzling sunbeams crowned it,  
Yes, a thing of joy I've found it  
    (As I've said.)

But I cannot help from thinking  
Of one flaw—no use of blinking:  
All those statues that are linking  
    Up the past  
With our day, seem calling to us:  
"You've no room here. Simply view us.  
You'll be famous only through us"—  
    I'm aghast!

Every tower place is taken,  
All self-confidence is shaken  
When we know we'll never waken  
    In a niche.  
Does it mean that we are fated,  
For oblivion all slated,  
That our star-hitched Ford has skated  
    Down a ditch?

Surely I've no wish to grumble  
Yet no man is quite so humble  
But he hopes some wall may crumble  
And he'll rise.

Each one has an inclination  
To climb out of his low station  
To a fairer elevation  
Near the skies.

Let me say in the beginning  
We have little hope of winning  
Some new form of cotton-ginning,  
Lest you laugh.

And we know that it of course is  
Quite absurd to think we've forces  
That will equal Samuel Morse's  
Telegraph.

It would be a work of super-  
Erogation to think Cooper  
We might rival—we can't dupe her,  
Clear-eyed Fame.

And we have no mean ambition  
To steal Calhoun's high position,  
And to Webster's erudition  
We've no claim.

But on Harkness they've put creatures,  
Some of them with women's features,  
Moral, allegoric teachers,  
Faith and Hope,  
Science, Justice, always weighing,  
On that tower forever staying.  
Is that right? (You should be saying  
Loudly, "Nope!")

Build a tower with empty places,  
And we'll try to break our traces,  
And we'll rush like one who races  
Down a slant,  
And we'll vow: "Soon with a grand air  
Looking nobly o'er this land where  
Once we lived, we too shall stand there."  
(But we shan't.)

# *In Osborn Hall*

## *I. AGE*

I watch you to-day at the end of your row  
    (You came early to class once again),  
By the way you are looking me over, I know  
    That we puzzle each other ; it's plain.

Your tastes, be it movies or books, I observe  
    Is Boeotian—that's primitive, rude—  
And your judgment of things lacks all depth  
    that age brings ;  
In a word, I might say you are crude.

When I see you stand there wildly pawing the  
    air  
    (Metaphorically), seeking a thought,  
Do you never suspect it's not hard to detect  
    That you're bluffing—like others I've  
    taught ?

I know that you feel all my work is unreal,  
    And that books, when you live, are but  
    tame ;  
That I'm stuck in the past while your life  
    moves on fast  
    With the thrill of a sharply fought game.

You can't comprehend how my time I can  
spend

In teaching what others have said;  
You think I'm benighted to get so excited  
O'er Chaucer. Why bother? He's dead.

But of course we're well-bred so we never  
have said

What we think of each other. Alas!  
Still we know, you and I, that between us  
must lie  
A chasm that neither can pass.

Yet the gulf that would sever us both, it  
may be,

Is not deep, as appears at first view,  
For certainly you are as funny to me,  
As I must seem funny to you.

## *II. YOUTH*

In old days they say that Plato  
Taught in quiet groves where all  
Heard him question and debate. O  
What a change from Osborn Hall.

Hear the trolley wheels loud creaking,  
Listen to that deafening bell!  
(That's not the Professor speaking;  
Merely some young newsboy's yell.)

(Men on the front row reclining  
Have not caught a word to-day,  
Yet his forehead's moist and shining.  
Sure he's working for his pay.)

That's a regimental band or  
Minstrel show—they drum too much.  
(He is lecturing on Landor,  
And his quiet, classic touch.)

(Is that poetry he's reading?)  
Siren screams a sounding shriek!  
That's the fire-chief, and he's speeding.  
One more fire sale this week.

On the Taft Hotel they're banging;  
With a most infernal sound  
Ring the iron girders, clanging  
As they dump them on the ground.

Whistles blowing, tires bursting,  
—Pandemonium's begun—  
Soothe the mind for culture thirsting.  
(What?—he's gone?—The lecture's done!)

## *Disillusionment*

I met him last vacation down in Maine,  
A self-made man, a multi-millionaire.  
Hearing I taught at Yale, he made it plain  
He wished to know me ; hoped that I would  
share  
His speedy yacht with him. With friendly  
mien  
He gave me cushioned seat in limousine.

Quite free with his cigars (they were the  
best)  
He oft entreated me to set him right.  
“Tell me what I must read,” he plead with  
zest,  
“Just put me wise and I’ll sit up all night.  
Come, tip me off. What books should I enjoy?  
Would you just coach me?” Would I?  
’Ataboy!

There, while the fragrant smoke about him  
curled,  
I opened for him regions unexplored,  
Told him of books that shaped our little  
world;  
Eyes shut, he listened, silent, never bored,



And when I ended, thinking 'twas enough,  
He started up, "Don't stop, Prof, you're hot  
stuff!"

Scarce had term opened when he wrote to me  
(Cigars, I add, accompanied the letter).

He said he'd done the books and wished to see  
Another list, the longer one, the better.

Let Sophomores yawn and sadly eye their  
wrist

Watches. Here's one who knows what he has  
missed.

To-day I found a letter in my box.

It bore his mark. How eagerly he sought  
Wisdom. Yet on the Campus there are flocks  
Of students fighting hard lest they be  
taught.

I knew his old request—'Twas not the same!  
*He wished ten tickets for the Harvard game.*

## *Fatality*

*(Written on Seeing the new Fire Escapes of  
Durfee Hall.)*

Whene'er I walk the campus round  
How much that's poor I see ;  
What buildings desecrate the ground—  
No plan, no symmetry—  
And now it's worse ! A poet's curse  
On those who spoiled Durfee.

All down its back, broad stairs of black,  
Verandahs at each turn ;  
Why, in my time, we all could climb  
Without the least concern  
A simple ladder's iron rungs.  
Such childish steps we'd spurn.

Can it be true the check I drew  
For the Alumni Fund  
Will help to pay for this display  
Of ugliness ? I'm stunned.  
My college pride, I fear, has died ;  
At least, it's moribund.

Yet over there the Harkness square  
Reveals new charm each day,  
And beauty's power in Wrexham tower  
Would make a pagan pray.  
Then why must we deface Durfee?  
Because—it's just our way.

## *To Alumni Hall*

Where once we rushed, like cattle sent  
To slaughter, where the brave and good  
Flunked, 'neath the massive battlement  
Of painted wood.

Where Banjo Clubs would jog a rhythm  
To make the very floors unstable;  
Where Richards taught the logarithm,  
From four place table.

Where once the Junior danced the German,  
Or told the chaperon tales that shocked her,  
As she sat yawning in her ermine,  
Bored as a proctor.

Where each Commencement grads assembled  
To hear the reverberate platitude,  
And at the stalest jests dissembled  
Great gratitude.

Alas, it goes! though o'er it glory  
Floats with the flag; and yet, I grant it,  
Better will be Wright dormitory  
That shall supplant it.

Where safely sheltered from the road or  
Gay York Street, Freshmen at their will  
May sniff up sanctity's fine odor  
From Dwight Hall grill.

## *Tale Station*

He dodged a trolley, nearly tripping  
In speeding past a crazy Ford.  
No chance for him, had he been slipping;  
He stands here, disappointed, bored.

Watching the clerks the mail distribute,  
Idly he leans against the wall.  
To this such frantic haste attribute:  
He sought a letter—that was all.

I find my box and I'm despairing.  
No luck. Here's mail that must be read.  
"Committee meeting"—futile, wearing;  
"Five lectures"—why, they'll talk us dead.

"Will you subscribe?"—where's the waste  
basket?  
What next; a fortune offered here!  
"We'll send the oil stocks if you ask it."  
We're not such fools as we appear.

"A friend and I have made a wager.  
Is it correct—" who cares, who knows?  
Why should I turn a single page, or  
Work for a bet? Bang! there that goes.

One letter more, just wait a minute;  
Not possible! It is, alack! !  
My manuscript—with genius in it—  
The editor has sent it back.

Still for his mail the student stays here.  
I'll put—you could not do it better—  
Two ages in a single phrase here:  
“Youth seeks and Age avoids—the letter.”

## *Lines on the Destruction of an Elm*

*Lines written December 2, 1912, on the destruction of the elm long standing on the corner of College and Chapel Streets.*

Thy rugged form, thy proud, substantial  
girth,  
Thy branches—arms outstretched to greet  
the sky,  
Thy stubborn roots, entwisted deep in earth,  
Could not avail. The sentinel must die.

In happier days, ere man defaced its realm,  
It heard from hall and fence the college  
glees ;  
And when the moonlight touched it, this old  
elm  
Shook, like a child, for joy at every breeze.

Ah ! heavy change ! the gloomy, great white  
way ;  
The Taft, that hides, unshamed, the sun-  
set's glow ;  
Osborn, where, mid the din, Professors pray  
Their shrieks may carry far as the front  
row.



Osborn, that weird, fantastic dream in stone,  
Perched like a squatting toad with open lip;  
Or like a ferry-boat—banged, battered, blown,  
Bumping a blunted nose into the slip.

The Taft, that strange, uncouth, smoke-  
clouded shape,  
Dwarfing the college halls in senseless  
pride;  
Can brick and limestone set the crowd agape,  
When all must see there is another side?

Hail and farewell, old friend; 'tis thy last  
Fall,  
Take thy last cut! Woodman, spare not this  
tree.

Fated to watch the Taft and Osborn Hall,  
Death is release—'tis better not to be.

## *Jazz*

Thomas, it's very good in you  
To ask me to your room. You knew  
That I like music. Heaven preserve me  
From screeching jazz, more will unnerve me.  
From every open window here  
Just jangling jazz jars jaded ear.  
I'd kill it all! ! You look perplexed.  
You've brought me to hear jazz? What next!  
O, never mind. Get on; go to it,  
But hear first how *we* used to do it.

I had this room once. 'Twas a treat,  
Stretched on this Durfee window seat,  
Down by that fence to hear them sing,  
In the warm, starry nights of Spring.  
The Glee Club gave us a rehearsal;  
From windows came a universal  
"More music." After every song  
Each room applauded loud and long.  
Why, I can almost hear again  
The ocean bass of Noah Swayne.  
When Runyon sang "Antigone"  
'Twas wit—not jazz vulgarity.  
We made our songs—but yours are gotten  
From Broadway shows, and, Tom, they're  
rotten.

Thomas, you listen, meek and docile;  
Deep in your heart you say "Old fossil."  
But, Thomas, do not think I scold  
Merely because I'm getting old.  
Of course things change. What need to rave  
or  
Grieve for the past, and yet a flavor  
That made this place once great, seems lack-  
ing—  
New York again? Keep right on packing—  
And college songs—half dreams, half fun,  
I hear no more; their day is done,  
And youths to midnight frolics run.

Well, Tom—he's gone! The movies claim  
him.  
He's been but once to-day; don't blame him.

## *The Wooden Spoon Prom*

*"On Wednesday evening, June 19th, Helms-müller's Band, under the auspices of the Spoon Committee, gave the usual Promenade Concert at Music Hall. The attendance was larger than it has been for many years. The hall had been decorated with taste and elegance. The music was bewitching, the ladies divine, 'and all went merry as a marriage bell.'"* Yale Literary Magazine, July, 1865.

Up two narrow flights I have hastened  
And here in the gallery row,  
Dejected in spirit and chastened,  
I gaze on the beauty below.  
With flags for the war that has ended,  
With bunting and wreaths, Music Hall  
Is a vision entrancing and splendid—  
I'm alone at the Wooden Spoon Ball.

First the concert; it's hard to live through it,  
All the music they play is a bore.  
What soul in the crowd listens to it?  
Not the guests promenading the floor.  
I've heard William Tell till I'm weary;  
Donizetti is trash; Meyerbeer  
With his Huguenots simply is dreary;  
Were it Lohengrin—hush! She is here.

White hoop-skirt, pink sash at her shoulder,  
Pink rose at her breast, in her hair  
With its dark Grecian curls—to behold her  
I lean o'er the railing and stare.  
Perhaps it's the heat makes me flighty—  
As I look at her surely I see  
Trojan Helen, divine Aphrodite,  
Or the Empress of France, Eugénie.

She moves like a queen through the dancers,  
Like a wave of the sea, never still.  
Was there ever such grace in the lancers,  
In the redowa, schottische, quadrille?  
The last time we met, I remember,  
She was distant and cold as the moon;  
She froze me like ice, last December—  
She sees me—she bows—this is June!

I'm down on the floor in a minute;  
(The best waltz of Helmsmüller's band)  
"My dance. We lose time; let's begin it."  
She smiles and she gives me her hand.  
To-morrow she'll beam upon Harry,  
Next week she'll be flirting with Tom,  
And it's Jack that she'll probably marry—  
Still, we'll dance at the Wooden Spoon  
Prom.

## *Penelope*

Penelope, Penelope,  
She sat in silence by the sea.  
Far out she gazed with eager eye,  
Naught but the gulls could she descry;  
And her Odysseus, where was he?  
Penelope, Penelope.

Penelope, Penelope,  
Is this the end of constancy  
Such as the world has never known,  
Here by the sea to watch alone?  
And her Odysseus, where was he?  
Penelope, Penelope.

“Ye gulls, as o’er the waves you flew,  
Saw you Odysseus and his crew?  
O clouds, O winds, O dancing foam,  
Tell if his prow be pointed home.”  
No answer came, alas, to thee,  
Penelope, Penelope.

Penelope, Penelope,  
She sank into a reverie:  
Odysseus seemed to tread the shore,  
She heard his thrilling voice once more—  
Who calls? who speaks? Can that be Death?  
Nay, ’tis her maid all out of breath.

“Please, Ma’am, will you come home with  
me?

There’s fifty suitors come to tea.

The cook has left, there ain’t no meat,

There’s nothing in the house to eat.

I’m overworked and underpaid,

You’ve got to get another maid!”

\* \* \* \* \*

One long, last look out o’er the sea,

Then home she skipped, Penelope.

## *After Herrick*

*(At some distance.)*

Gather ye rosebugs while ye may  
For they are still a-flying;  
And this same flower that smiles to-day  
To-morrow may be dying.

The glorious vamp of heaven, the sun,  
The higher it's a-getting  
The more the rosebugs, one by one,  
Their appetites are whetting.

That way is best that kills the first;  
As days are getting warmer  
They come in swarms, and worse, and worst  
Will still succeed the former.

Then be not coy, but use your time;  
Kill while you may—don't tarry,  
Or else your roses, e'er their prime,  
Will look like the old Harry.



## *Christmas Vacation*

Loud shouts are echoing up the stair ;  
Trunk-laden porters grunt and slip ;  
The janitors, with eager air,  
Await the tip.

Long lines of sputtering taxis rush,  
Filled to the brim to cut the fare,  
Spattering the passer-by with slush  
As on they tear.

All is confusion, clatter, din ;  
Endure it, for the shouting dies,  
And soon, like some deserted inn,  
The campus lies.

From darkened halls no warm lights glow,  
'Tis quiet as the sleeping sea.  
"It must be pretty lonely." "No,  
This just suits me."

No visitor to ask his mark ;  
No themeless themes to split the head ;  
No poems, where there glows no spark,  
Need now be read.

No living by the chapel chime ;  
What matter if I should be late ?  
What luxury to know the time  
Yet sleep till eight.

Now we may loiter o'er the meal,  
(Mostly like hunted deer we feed)  
And talk with friends, and best—may feel  
We've time to read.

O pious founders, build anew ;  
Endow us with investments prudent  
And see what faculties could do,—  
Without one student.

# *The Bluffer*

## *A COLLEGE LEGEND*

"Don't work," the bluffer said, "it doesn't pay;

In textbooks never once have I invested,  
But when Professors speak, in every way  
I try to show I'm deeply interested.

Look bright; take notes; be cheerful—never  
scowl;

Seem wise; imagine you're Minerva's owl."

Sometimes when the Professor tried a joke  
At which the class would hardly deign to  
smile,

A jest (B. C.) that some poor half-wit spoke  
In Nineveh or Thebes (upon the Nile),  
Or labored, pointless pun not worth a straw,  
You heard the bluffer's echoing guffaw.

He hung on every word as if entranced,  
And questions after class he always had;  
From the instructor's face he never glanced  
At Yale News, neatly folded on his pad.

When the clock struck and men leaped eager-  
eyed

Doorward, he sat as loath to leave, and sighed.

Judging 'twas time to see how matters lay,  
He neared the desk. Then, with a friendly  
smirk:

"This course is simply great! Oh, by the way,  
What is my stand? I hope it shows my work.  
Really, I study hard enough to sap a  
Prize fighter—but I want Phi Beta Kappa."

A weary smile crossed the Professor's face:  
"We differentiate a flunk and bluffing.

When a man bluffs, a minus mark we place  
Against his name. That knocks the very  
stuffing

Out of his stand. Your mark? Shades of  
Gervinus!

(A German scholar)—you are eighty—  
minus!"

As an exhausted swimmer grasps a rope,  
The bluffer clutched the desk, and changed  
his tune:

Pleading he said: "I have a chance, I hope,  
If I work like a dog from now till June—  
(He stuck his chest out, every inch a hero)—  
Give me a chance to raise that stand to zero!"

## *General Information*

*O for that warning voice, which he who saw  
The Apocalypse heard cry in Heaven aloud,  
Then when the Dragon, put to second rout,  
Came furious down to be revenged on men,  
Woe to the inhabitants on Earth!*

*Book IV, lines i-v.*

These lines, as you may well surmise,  
Are from a famous poem built on  
Heroic plan, from "Paradise  
Lost," epic written by John Milton.

Our text the hard parts would explain;  
For this, no single clue it gave them.  
Here was a chance to try again  
Could "general information" save them.

My moving finger wrote, with chalk,  
(Their dull, dead stupor, who could draw it?  
Seeing their hopes cut at the stalk)  
"What was th' Apocalypse? Who saw it?"

They shook their heads in mute despair.  
Amid the silence, I felt creeping,  
Converging on my desk and chair,  
Curses from anguished minds outseeping.

That done, and with their minds relieved,  
Each one his pencil slowly nibbled,  
Then, like some criminal reprieved,  
They all impetuously scribbled.

I took their papers; off I sped;  
I barred my door so oft invaded.  
You know each answer must be read  
And, worse than that, it must be graded.

I read: "Th' Apocalypse you'll view  
In heaven. They're stars; I've never seen  
them."  
"The Testaments, one old, one new,  
Hold the Apocalypse between them."

"Th' Apocalypse,—a monster feared,  
But killed by Jason, classics tell us."  
"It was a famous temple, reared  
Upon a cliff in Athens, Hellas."

And written by a plodding lad  
Who had not wit—his forte was bathos:  
"A wild, weird dream St. Patrick had  
When captured on the isle of Pathos!"

Reader, with care this work I've done,  
Their answers you have read verbatim;  
Call at my office—twelve to one—  
Their manuscripts, you can collate 'em.

I read no more on couch reclined,  
I'd seen enough to feel omniscient,  
For of the Sophomoric mind  
This Revelation was sufficient.

## *Ignis Fatuus*

All through the college year a light is glowing,  
ing,

A hope that we may rise to heights sublime,  
Shining before the world, our genius showing,  
By work that we shall do in summer time.

O bitter jest of "Academic leisure"!  
(Pronounce that "e" short) as we're rushed  
and driven,  
Still in our hearts a sacred hope we treasure:  
In summer, in vacation we'll be given

Time to put down the thoughts we long to  
utter,

To write the play, to build the lofty rhyme,  
In fact, to show we're worth our bread and  
butter—

A chance to work! 'Twill come in summer  
time.

\* \* \* \* \*

The term has ended; off on our vacation  
We find the first weeks that we need a  
rest.

To try to work would be exasperation,  
Man only soars when he is at his best.



We had not dreamed that we were so depleted,  
Though college terms are one continued  
strain ;

At last we're ready, at our desk we're seated—  
Too late ! Next week the term begins again !

Unconquered, every year that dream comes to  
us—

And every year it is not worth a dime—  
And still that old ambition surges through us,  
Of work we'll surely do in summer time.

When I retire upon a modest pension,  
I'll seek some inexpensive, tropic isle,  
(Not the South Seas—a place with more con-  
vention)  
Some spot where it is summer all the while.

I'll have no callers—there's the sea about it—  
My life no more is set to Battell's chime,  
Perhaps I can begin then—but I doubt it—  
That work I meant to do in summer time.

## *In Absentia*

I say to you I hold it true  
As axiom mathematical,  
That he is blest above the rest  
Who's off on his sabbatical.

He can explore each foreign shore  
In manner autocratical;  
In Greece he dreams—(and we read themes!)  
The man on his sabbatical.

He sings a paeon o'er Bodleian,  
In knowledge grows piratical.  
We wear our mind on bluff and grind,  
While he's on his sabbatical.

We toil each night; he can delight  
In pleasures operatical,  
Sleep late next day—and merely say:  
“Why, I'm on my sabbatical.”

No telephone can make him groan  
By constant ring emphatical.  
Beyond the pale of dunning mail,  
The man on his sabbatical.

When longed-for Spring but comes to bring  
A laziness climatical,  
He need harass no sleepy class,  
The man on his sabbatical.

Millennium would surely come  
And life would grow ecstatical,  
Could we teach here the even year,  
The odd one, take sabbatical!

## *The Lecture*

Collège de France, a dingy room;  
Bent o'er the desk, he turns his pages  
Droning a lecture in the gloom  
On "Beauty in the Middle Ages."

Outside, the world in May attire  
Would make the dullest, calmest sages  
Throw all their books into the fire—  
Here's "Beauty in the Middle Ages."

First, he will take a "rapid view";  
He ambles on in lengthy stages.  
I might be walking at St. Cloud,  
But—"Beauty in the Middle Ages."

To-night the woods of Fontainebleau—  
Another theme his mind engages,  
Another point we all must know  
Of "Beauty in the Middle Ages."

Out in the street I hear a song;  
We sit mute, captive birds in cages.  
Our life is short, the lecture's long.  
O "Beauty in the Middle Ages."

Without, the sky with stars is sown.

Wisdom, is this your gift, your wages!

Poor man—his world a stick, a stone,

That's "Beauty in the Middle Ages."

Long years of study—this is all.

Anger, revolt within me rages.

"Le cinquième point"—I leave the hall.

He died, lost in the Middle Ages.

## *The Match*

*(Not after Swinburne.)*

*"Matches shall not be brought to the Library."  
Bodleian Library Staff-Kalendar, 1912, p. 50.*

One fatal day I wound my way  
Up Bodley's steep ascent;  
My shoulders showed the scholar's stoop,  
Even my mind was bent  
(On books)—I was no undergrad—  
I knew what study meant.

As on I sped with decorous tread  
Rare manuscripts to scan,  
I drew a note from out my coat  
And a match fell down! What man  
Confronts me there with fearful glare?  
'Tis the Librarian! ! !

My blood congealed, my senses reeled,  
For the stern rule I'd read;  
I thought that every hair must rise  
In terror on my head;  
Then I recalled I was quite bald  
So I had a chill instead.

There in the gloom I saw my doom—  
Ejected by the staff!  
I'd read no more on the upper floor  
The German monograph;  
For me no home 'neath Radcliffe's dome;—  
I laughed a ghastly laugh.

"I swear 'tis true, I never knew  
I owned that match." He sighed.  
"Some knave, I wot, devised this plot  
To ruin me." I cried.  
"I never smoke"—no more I spoke,  
For I saw he knew I lied.

He bent him down beneath his gown;  
Now my last hope was dead.  
My sight grew dim as I gazed on him  
Thrilled with a nameless dread.  
I saw him snatch the accursed match—  
*'Twas a match without a head!*

# *The Insomniac*

## *A NARRATIVE POEM IN TWO CANTOS*

### CANTO I

He could not sleep! 'Twas undeserved.

Sleepless he watched the morning break,  
Then went, all wearied and unnerved,  
To keep an early class awake.

Life's tragic chance—Fate's bitter jest,  
That he whose voice taught eyes to close  
Should be deprived the gift of rest,  
Yes, even one half-hour's doze.

Said he, "I teach at eight and two.  
They're sleepest just after lunch.  
I shout until my face is blue,  
I use up all my pep and punch.

"So when night comes, my wearied brain  
Keeps plodding on, too tired to stop;  
Another week, I'll go insane.  
I'm dying, like a tree, on top."



I asked: "Do you to church resort?

A sermon may invite to slumber;

An educational report

Is very apt to get your number.

"The cure may seem worse than the ill,

Yet since your desperate case we're treating,  
I think more soporific still

Would be the drawn-out fac'lty meeting."

"I've tried them all," he sadly said,

"I've plunged through many a German  
thesis

To find, when I had gone to bed,

My old insomnia increases.

"I'll take to drugs!" "Stop that!" I cried,

"I'll make you slumber long and late."

I knew the cure he should have tried,

I sought an undergraduate.

## CANTO II

"I know Professor X? Some kid!

I took his course," he said. "And why?  
A chance to sleep—the whole class did;  
You know he's called the Tsetse Fly.

"If you should ever feel all in,  
Attend his lecture—that's my hunch.  
Not eight o'clock—that hour's a sin;  
Besides, he's sleepest after lunch."

I hired then a good stenog-  
Rapher each sleep-fraught word to take,  
And lest his brain should slip a cog,  
With coffee drugged him wide awake.

At five I had the lecture all  
Typewritten. Then I sought his wife  
And in a brief, five-minute call  
I taught her how to save his life.

That evening when the clock struck ten  
He paced his study, haggard, cowed.  
Enter the wife; he stopped; she then  
Suggested that she read aloud.

"Sit down," she bade, "and close your eyes;  
I've found a paper you must hear."  
She read, and to her glad surprise  
A heavy breathing struck her ear.

She yawned herself. The fire bells pealed;  
Jangled the angry telephone;  
It thundered loud. Lightning revealed  
Him sleeping still as any stone.

She tiptoed to her room, while there  
Completely cured (such was the power  
Of his own lecture) in that chair  
He slept straight till the breakfast hour.

To see ourselves as others do  
(So R. B. said) from pride would clear us.  
A better plan—and that's *my* view—  
To hear ourselves as others hear us.

## *Ode on the Intimations of an Unexpected Cut*

There was a time when campus, hall and  
tower,

The grass—a most pathetic sight—

To me did seem

Apparell'd in celestial light

If the professor, lagging, missed the hour.

Whither is fled the visionary gleam?

For now, an item in the News will say:

“Professor X no lecture gives to-day.”

Or on a blackboard, read by all who pass:

“Instructor Grindhard cannot meet his  
class.”

It is not now as it hath been of yore;

List as I will,

All is too still,

The cheers which once I heard I hear no  
more.

Ye happy students, I have heard the call

Ye to each other make; I see

In my mind's eye, your boist'rous jubilee;

The fullness of your bliss, I feel—I feel it all.

A lecture's but a sleep and a forgetting

When trailing clouds of pipe-smoke do ye  
come;

And too much learning works the mind's up-  
setting

And leaves the spirit dumb.

Whither has fled the shout that pierced the  
ear

When in life's daily rut

Came the unhopèd-for 'cut?

Where (don't ask me), where are the elms of  
yester-year?

Him, haply slumbering o'er a ponderous  
tome

In Whitney Avenue home

The clock arouses with its warning note.

With pallid face he's out upon the street,

Through lips in anguish set,

Mutt'ring, "I'll fool them yet,"

And wishing that the hour would come with  
leaden feet.

He waits with melancholy

The fast approaching trolley,

But who his wild despair can ever guess

When he beholds—a Waterb'ry express!

Now must he run, on past the tennis courts

Where careless youth disports.

Now scarce he sees

Fair Hillhouse Avenue as on he flees;

He notes not how the elm-beetled trees high  
                     over-arched embower,  
 He looks but at the clock on Sheffield tower,  
 And wishes that his legs, now wobbling, had  
                     more power.  
 Yet on he rushes past the dining hall  
             Whence odors fierce appall;  
 On through the street ycleped Grub  
             And in his speed displaces  
 The groups of bootblacks with their shin-  
             ing faces  
             (Ay, their's the rub).  
 What reck's he though his shine be three days  
             old?  
             Nor does he even stop  
             To gaze in the Co-op  
 To find if one more textbook has been sold.  
             (Auri sacra fames,  
             O get-rich-quick disease.)  
 He does not stay to draw from his postbox  
 Those circulars of fortune-bringing stocks;  
             But faint, and scant of breath,  
             O'er Elm Street, 'scaping death,  
 He leaps. Now from Durfee the way is clear.  
 Sudden the chimes ring out, the students  
             cheer—  
 He utters low a word unmeet for lady's ear!

Battell's chimes toll the knell of parting day,  
The lowing herd wind slowly off to tea,  
Professors homeward plod their weary way  
And leave Yale's world to Weiser and to  
me.

Thanks to their thirty cuts, the students live  
Through tests and questionings with bluffs  
and fears.  
To me an unexpected cut would give  
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for  
jeers.

## *To a Freshman*

They tell me that you start for Yale to-night;  
I trust it may not dull anticipation  
To hear from me some homely maxims, quite  
Horatian.

At college there are men who seek "great  
place"  
(So Bacon calls it) with much noise and  
riot.  
Remember shouting never won a race—  
Keep quiet.

Life is a crowded course, the track is long,  
The runner who would win is always  
ready;  
Throw not away your strength in wine and  
song—  
Keep steady.

You'll hear much worldly wisdom, simon-  
pure.  
Look at Truth's sunlight calmly, without  
blinking;  
Remember half the sure things are not sure—  
Keep thinking.



The mind must move or else it turns to rust;  
You blunt its edge when you descend to  
shirking.

Test what you hear; take little upon trust—  
Keep working.

It is no mark of greatness to complain,  
And wit is far removed from mere reviling.  
Remember laughter clears a clouded brain—  
Keep smiling.

When failure seems the end of bold desire,  
Sit not, like shivering Age, forever groping  
Over the whitening ashes of the fire—  
Keep hoping.

You may have watched a swimmer, far from  
shore,  
Sink in a wave whose foaming crest is  
breaking.  
You hear his last cry in the ocean's roar,  
(Mistaking.)

The wave recedes, an arm gleams in the light,  
He plunges on; life's cup seems overbrim-  
ming.  
So when a breaker buries *you* from sight—  
Keep swimming.

## *Admonition*

Thomas, it's always been my rule  
In the Memorial Vestibule  
As I pass by on either side  
The names of those who fought and died,  
To doff my hat. I see that you  
Without that gesture hurry through.  
Those names, unnoticed and unknown,  
Are in your eyes just so much stone.  
Thomas, I think if you but knew,  
You'd quickly change that point of view.

Those names, engraven on that wall,  
Were men in love with life, with all  
That makes this place, that thrills you here.  
How often have I joined the cheer  
For one as down the track he sped,  
For one who drove his shell ahead.  
One, the true Falstaff, I still see  
Shaking his sides with jollity.  
The wide Bowl seemed a flower of blue  
For one as he went dashing through  
The opposing line. In college room  
I've talked with them. The twilight gloom  
Stole in unnoticed. Books and art,  
And music—all life's better part—  
How much they meant, how much to plan

60

In the long years before each man.  
Cloud castles gleamed with magic light;  
We read and talked far into night.

Little those names to you can tell,  
You only know they fought and fell.  
They died on land, on sea, in air,  
They went to meet Death everywhere;  
They led the charge; they met the end  
In lonely outpost, far from friend.  
They died while sheltering their men,  
They fell in flames, one fighting ten. . . .  
Perhaps it's best for you and me  
We know not their nobility,  
For if we did, we might despise  
Ourselves, and all that we now prize.

If we forget what they have done,  
Better for us oblivion.  
Better each hall and tower were drowned,  
Buried beneath the engulfing Sound.  
And if within these walls such men  
Shall never work and play again,  
If there's among us none who see  
The dreams of life, the mystery,

Or feel at times great winds rush by  
Lifting the spirit to the sky,  
Better all Yale were swept away  
And where it stood, no man could say.

Thomas, it is not much to do—  
I'd doff my cap, if I were you.

## *To a Senior*

I can't believe that your four years are ending;

I've caught brief glimpses of you, and you go.

"Time flies"—I'll say no more. What use of spending

Last moments in dull platitudes all know.

Surely no barrier has been between us;

Our friendship will outlast your course, I trust.

I hope you've found the Professorial genus

Not half bad, when you get beneath the crust.

Now for good-bye, no lecture I am giving,

(Though old didactic habits are quite strong)

But some stray hints upon the "Art of Living,"

As Fielding calls it—I shall not be long.

You've shown yourself a man of some discerning.

Out in the rush of life you'll quickly find  
It does not matter much what you've been learning;

Your fate hangs on the temper of your mind.

And five years hence, you'll have small recollection

Of all you studied, all you hurried through.  
It matters not, if, in the right direction,  
(And we have tried) we may have pointed you.

We've shown you the world's best, in thought,  
in action;

To what far heights the soul of man can mount.

Climb high yourself. There's little satisfaction  
In summing life up by a bank account.

Keep some bright dream. Don't end up dull  
and sodden.

(So many do.) Often a poet's line  
Can lift you from the ruts of life, deep-trodden,

And Beauty change the brute to the divine.

Never come back fat, fatuous at forty,  
Thinking Yale's life is measured by a  
game;  
With prosperous air, a cynic, somewhat sporty,  
The old fire gone—not even a quivering  
flame.

We'll never solve this crux of education.  
One year we make—the next, destroy our  
plan;  
But if you've caught here Truth's high in-  
spiration,  
Think of us all as kindly as you can.





*IN VACATION*



In term time we must flippant be,  
Lest, brain-struck, we should grow delirious.

Vacation brings tranquillity,  
And, for whole weeks, we dare be serious.

Read but these verses, written then.  
(They're simple sketches, quite informal)  
Yet they may prove we're average men  
And—out of classrooms—fairly normal.



## *Poplars*

The poplar is a lonely tree.  
It has no branches spreading wide  
Where birds may sing or squirrels hide.  
It throws no shadows on the grass  
Tempting the wayfarers who pass  
To stop and sit there quietly.

The poplar sees each neighbor tree  
Loved by the birds. The oriole  
Swings from the elm its home; the bole  
Of that rough oak, above, around,  
Hears the woodpecker's rapid sound  
As on he works industriously.

The poplar is a slender tree.  
It has no boughs where children try  
To climb far off into the sky.  
To hold a swing it's far too weak,  
Too small it is for hide-and-seek.  
Friendless, forsaken it must be.

The poplar is a restless tree.  
At every breeze its branches bend  
And signal to the child, "Come, friend."  
Its leaves forever whispering  
To thrush and robin, "Stay and sing."  
They pass. It quivers plaintively.

Poplars are lonely. They must grow  
Close to each other in a row.

New Haven.

## *Recompense*

Where the green fir-tips meet the sapphire sky  
A gull, cloud-white,  
Careless of earth, floats insolently by  
In the warm light.

Still, imperturbable, it holds a course  
To lands unknown,  
And scornful of the south wind's gathering  
force  
It sails alone,

Seeing unmoved the noon's exultant glow,  
The evening's grief,  
The wind-swept waves that crumble into  
snow  
Upon the reef.

The ships becalmed or scudding for the shore  
In wind and rain,  
Alluring isles—all these it passes o'er  
In calm disdain.

Deep in the woods, the sea left far behind,  
I listen long,  
Searching in ambush, yet in vain, to find  
Who sings that song.

I know those notes pure as the brooks that  
    gush  
    Down Alpine vale ;  
Enchantress of the woods, the hermit-thrush,  
    Our nightingale.

Its world a forest bough ; here in the shade  
    It sings unseen  
The magic songs a yearning lover made  
    To charm a queen.

The ocean-wandering gull from all his quest  
    Can nothing bring.  
You have the world within your throbbing  
    breast,  
    For you can sing.

Maine.



## *The Wife*

The day was fair, the wind blew steadily.  
We raised the sails and headed straight to  
sea,

Gay fugitives from that mad prison pen  
The City; the new Moloch to whom men  
Offer themselves a living sacrifice.  
We had escaped. Sudden before our eyes  
Unrolled the wind-tossed carpet of the seas,  
The radiant fields of heaven shone. At ease,  
Sprawling upon the deck, we watched on high  
The lazy clouds, outstripped as we sped by;  
Laughed as the spray flew over us, and now  
Heard the waves singing round our eager  
prow.

Like drowsy children, careless and content,  
We looked, but questioned not what all this  
meant.

Rousing us from this happy lethargy,  
Our artist called us to awake and see  
The ocean shadows drifting clouds had made,  
With half the waves in light, and half in  
shade.

His pipe in hand, he praised the skill of one  
Whose brush could catch the waters, hold the  
sun,

And fix the heavens in a gilded frame.  
Our poet spoke of one, assured of fame,  
Whose verse swayed with the rhythm of the  
    tide  
And foam-peaked waves, and dipping gulls.  
    He tried  
To sing the ballad he had lately made.  
From that we talked of music ; how one played  
Until it seemed Nature herself had lent  
All earthly tones to his small instrument.  
At length we felt our day was incomplete,  
Old Adam rose within us—we must eat.

Hot from the cabin, eagerly we took  
The feast prepared by our much lauded cook ;  
Well fed, untroubled, what more could life  
    give ?

“Brothers,” said one, “this is the way to live,  
Feasting on chowder, nature, verse, and art.”

“Here,” said the skipper, “hand me up that  
    chart.

That sky looks angry. Luckily we planned  
To sail no further ; now we’ll make for land.”  
We found upon the chart our little bay  
And all the reefs that barred our vessel’s way.  
The wind blew sharply as we went about.  
“There’s nasty weather coming, it’s no doubt.”

As we drew near the harbor a small boat  
Came bounding towards us. In tarpaulin coat  
A fisher, all alone, stood at the wheel.

"Look," cried our skipper, "how would you  
folks feel

To be there sailing headed out to sea ?

And that's a woman ; she's the kind for me.

It's do or die, her children must be fed,

And she must find the food, her man half  
dead.

In a rough sea like this, it takes a lot

Of strength to pull in just one lobster pot ;

And then, to hold your boat in wind and rain.

That's the best woman on the coast of Maine."

And now her boat shot past us, and we all

Raised a loud cheer, but if she heard our call,

She never turned nor waved to us her hand.

Against the darkening sky we saw her stand,

Holding her course, drenched by the driving  
spray.

We watched her till she faded far away.

Abashed we stood, we who had played with  
life,

Awed by the sudden glimpse of that lone  
wife ;

Like guilty men who silently confess,

Stunned by the thought of our own littleness.

Maine.

## *Three Friends*

Fate and hard foes are prevailing?

Friends leave you stricken? The three,  
When was their strength ever failing,  
The cliff, and the wind, and the sea!

Steep climbs the path—never shun it—

Up where the hidden larks sing;  
There is rest on the cliff when you've won it,  
In the grass that is fragrant with ling.

No cry from the gulls, dipping, calling;

No voice from the boats far below;  
No sound from the waves, leaping, falling,  
To edge the sand crescent with snow.

Here stilled is the scourging emotion,

And hushed is the Memory's sigh  
In the limitless peace of the ocean,  
In the moors rolling up to the sky.

Comes the wind; with a shout he is chasing

The crested waves—faster he flies.  
The fishing fleet homeward is racing,  
Cloud galleons speed down the skies.

Sheer the cliff ; but your dauntless desiring  
Through the high gates of Heaven shall  
climb.

Your spirit, keen, quenchless, untiring,  
Shall pass the gray mere-stones of Time.

Strong the wind ; now the far sails are filling.  
Outstripping each bark shall you go  
Through fathomless seas where the thrilling  
Swift wind of the spirit shall blow.

The baffled waves, ceaselessly ranging,  
Must find at the cliff their far goal ;  
More resistless, onrushing, unchanging,  
Sweep the measureless tides of the soul.

Man, are strong foes pressing near you ?  
Seek out your friends—they are three.  
Are they not waiting to cheer you,  
The cliff, and the wind, and the sea !

Sidmouth, Devon.

## *The High Hills of Moab*

Over the deep valley where clings Siloam  
town,  
Eastward I'm gazing, dreaming, for Olivet  
drops down  
And there beyond the Dead Sea, clear wrought  
against the sky,  
A strange land of wonder, the Hills of Moab  
lie.

From those bleak uplands to Bethlehem's  
hillside green  
Came Ruth broken-hearted in strange fields  
to glean.  
There John lay murdered for a Queen's de-  
sire—  
The sunset glow on Moab is a smouldering  
fire.

When from her deserts Queen Cleopatra came  
Luring proud Herod with her eyes of flame,  
Silent she saw those hills of Moab stand  
Like a dream, when the moonlight flooded all  
the land.

What should I find there if I scaled their  
steep,

Black tents of Kedar and pastures for sheep,  
Oleanders blooming by the swift running  
stream?

The far hills of Moab in the twilight gleam.

Homing rooks circle round their nests in the  
wall,

Cool grow the wheat fields as the long  
shadows fall;

The day's work is ended, and yet I stand and  
stare

At the high hills of Moab and wonder what  
lies there.

Jerusalem.

## *Damascus*

As I rode to Damascus,  
Camels went lumbering by  
With jangling bells and blue beads  
To charm the evil eye.  
With cloths and silks o'erburdened,  
Swaying like ships at sea,  
They plodded down the white road  
That winds to Galilee.

As I rode to Damascus  
Dazed by the noonday glow,  
Wishing to climb to Hermon's peaks  
And reach cool plains of snow;  
Sudden the parched earth vanished,  
In waving trees, thick set,  
I saw blue domes arising  
And slender minaret.

All Babylon's green gardens  
Lie fathoms deep in sand,  
But Damascus is a cool grove  
On the edge of desert land.  
The streams of bleak Judaea  
Are dried up in the heat;  
But rivers, in Damascus,  
Run dancing through the street.



O Damascus is a rare town  
To one far journeying,  
For there, through all the starlit night,  
I heard the water sing.

Esh-Shâm.

## *The Ending*

I stand at close of day  
On Carmel's height;  
Across the sapphire bay  
Acre gleams bright.

The sea outshines the sky—  
Blue, purple, green—  
Where fleets from Tyre swept by  
No sails are seen.

Birds sing on every side.  
Without avail  
Priests groveled here and cried,  
“Hear us, O Baal.”

Through all Esdraelon's plain  
No camp fires gleam;  
That armies here were slain  
Is but a dream.

Where Barak put to flight,  
As Deborah tells,  
Sisera, the Canaanite,  
The goatherd dwells.

On far-stretched plain and sea  
Shadows descend.  
Pursuit, rout, victory  
Come to this end.

The sea bears from the moon  
A golden fleece.  
Though it be late or soon,  
All ends in peace.

Mt. Carmel.

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